

RUSSELL COUNTY

Honorable Eric B. Funderburk

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PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Russell County's teen pregnancy rate will be reduced
2. Russell County's dropout rate will be reduced
3. Progress will be made toward establishing a Head Start facility in Ladonia

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county.

Health - Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

High rate of teen pregnancy

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which address both Abstinence and safe sex practices.
- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for at risk youth
- Work to expand and strengthen dropout recovery programs and alternative educational programs for teens that have already had children

Lack of adequate health insurance

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Make information concerning availability of existing insurance programs available to parents at school registration
- Start a campaign to educate parents on the general availability of health insurance and its benefits

Mental health

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to bring a juvenile, mental health, crisis center to Russell County
- Work to bring a juvenile, inpatient, mental health, treatment facility to Russell County
- Work to educate parents so that they may identify the early signs of their child's mental health issues

Safety - Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Parental substance abuse

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to educate mandated reporters on the signs that a parent may be abusing narcotics
- Work to increase the availability and accessibility of substance abuse recovery and treatment programs in Russell County.
- Support local law enforcement agencies in their efforts to enforce current drug laws.

Juvenile substance abuse

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to educate parents and mandated reporters on the signs that a child may be abusing narcotics
- Work to increase the availability and accessibility of substance abuse recovery and treatment programs in Russell County
- Support local law enforcement agencies in their efforts to enforce current drug laws

Unsupervised Children

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for at risk youth
- Increase availability of affordable child care
- Increase availability and accessibility to Parenting Classes

Education - Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Reduction of truancy and dropout rate

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Continue to support the existing Russell County CHINS intervention program
- Expand the CHINS intervention program to include children under 12yrs. Old. This will alleviate some of the stress currently on DHR and help in our efforts to identify, early on, at-risk youth.
- Support and expand the Russell County High School program designed to accelerate the academic progress of over-aged 8th grade students to get them back on track with their high school class.

Increase the accessibility and availability of tutoring programs

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for at risk youth
- Work with the schools to create tutoring programs which can be administered during the school day and free of charge
- Work with local universities and civic groups to find volunteers to tutor students, free of charge

Establishing positive school behaviors early

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for at risk youth
- Expand the CHINS intervention program to include children under 12 years old. This will alleviate some of the stress currently on DHR and help in our efforts to identify, early on, at-risk youth
- Work to educate parents on the importance of their child's education and the importance of establishing a good foundation for their child

Early Care and Education - Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Filling the gaps in early care and education in the county

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Acquiring autonomy for the Russell County Head Start programs rather than being grouped together with Lee County and under their control
- Work to create a separate Head Start Facility in the Ladonia area. Currently residents of Ladonia have to take their children over 25 miles to the nearest Head Start facility
- Increase transportation opportunities to and from the existing Head Start facilities

Increase the capacity of current early care programs

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to create a 0-3 program for the Phenix City Head Start program
- Increase the transportation opportunities to and from the existing Head Start facilities
- Work to secure funding in order to increase capacity at the existing facilities

Increase awareness of availability of health insurance and increase availability

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Make information concerning availability of existing insurance programs available to parents at school registration
- Start a campaign to educate parents on the general availability of health insurance and its benefits

Economic Security

- Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Increase the availability of affordable public transportation, primarily for the rural areas of the county

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Identify current availability and needs
- Formulate a solution based upon those needs
- Identify funding for that solution

Increase availability of job training resources to rural residents

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Identify current availability and needs
- Formulate a solution based upon those needs
- Identify funding for that solution

Increase availability of affordable daycare

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Acquiring autonomy for the Russell County Head Start programs rather than being grouped together with Lee County and under their control
- Work to create a separate Head Start Facility in the Ladonia area. Currently residents of Ladonia have to take their children over 25 miles to the nearest Head Start facility
- Increase transportation opportunities to and from the existing Head Start facilities

Parent Involvement and Skills

- Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Increased support for Grandparent and other non-foster parents raising children that are not their biological children

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to educate non-parent custodians on the process by which they can seek legal custody and child support
- Create a support network for non-parent custodians. This would be similar to the Foster Parents association.

The Parents' lack of knowledge/education necessary to assist their children in completing their homework assignments and perform successfully in school

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to educate parents on the importance of their child's education and the importance of establishing a good foundation for their children.
- Work to expand and strengthen dropout recovery programs and alternative educational programs for teens that have already had children
- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for at risk youth

The parents' lack of desire to assist their children in being academically successful

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Work to create new programs and strengthen existing programs which offer after school activities for at-risk youth
 - Work to educate parents on the importance of their child's education and the importance of establishing a good foundation for their child
 - Expand the CHINS intervention program to include children under 12 years old. This will alleviate some of the stress currently on DHR and help in our efforts to identify, early on, at-risk youth
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Policy Recommendation

1. Start a campaign to educate parents on the general availability of health insurance and its benefits.
2. Expand the CHINS intervention program to include children under 12 years old. This will alleviate some of the stress currently on DHR and help in our efforts to identify, early on, at risk youth.
3. Work to bring a Juvenile, mental health, crisis center to Russell County.
4. Work to bring a Juvenile, inpatient, mental health, treatment facility to Russell County.
5. Work to increase the availability and accessibility of substance abuse recovery and treatment programs in Russell County.
6. Support and expand the Russell County High School program designed to accelerate the academic progress of over-aged 8th grade students to get them back on track with their high school class.
7. Work to educate non-parent custodians on the process by which they can seek legal custody and child support.
8. Work to expand and strengthen dropout recovery programs and alternative educational programs for teens that have already had children.
9. Create a support network for non-parent custodians. This would be similar to the Foster Parents association.
10. Acquiring autonomy for the Russell County Head Start programs rather than being grouped together with Lee County and under their control..